At present, under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) more than 1,50,000 students offer Sanskrit at Secondary and Senior School levels. It is one of the three most sought after language subjects at the Secondary level.

CBSE has also recently introduced the communicative approach in the teaching of Sanskrit along with a number of teaching training programmes. Under the communicative approach, the curriculum has been made more attractive by facilitating active participation of students in the learning process giving emphasis on reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

Government has also set up three Deemed Sanskrit Universities viz. Shri Lal Bhadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha (LBSRSV) at New Delhi, Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha at Tirupati and Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan (RSKS), New Delhi. In the Vidyapiths of the RSKS and LBSRV Computer courses have been introduced. In collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, efforts are underway in RSV, Tirupati and RSKS to use satellite and the Internet for interactive Sanskrit teaching.

For both school and college level students and for the general public, the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi has also opened 100 non-formal centers where spoken Sanskrit courses of three months' duration are conducted.

Review of pay scales

4440. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Rastogi Committee Report to Review the Pay Scales of University and College Teachers have recommended NET exemption for Ph.Ds to be qualified as Lecturers in Universities and Colleges; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for not accepting this recommendation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. VALLABHBHAI RAMJI BHAI KATHIRIA) : (a) and (b) According to the information furnished by the University Grants Commisssion (UGC), the Rastogi Committee had recommended that those candidates who have 55% marks in the Master's Degree and have obtained Ph.D. after 1993 should be exempted from qualifying in the NET/SLET to become eligible for the post of Lecturer.

The matter was considered by the UGC and it was felt that such an exemption would dilute the standard of Ph.D. and also quality of teaching.

Accordingly, NET or its equivalent examination accredited by the UGC, has been made compulsory qualification for appointment as Lecturer even for the candidates having Ph.D. degree. The UGC has, however, decided that the candidates, who have completed M.Phil degree by 31-12-1993 or have submitted Ph.D. thesis to the university in the concerned subject on or before 31-12-2002, are exempted from appearing in the NET examination. In case, such candidates fail to obtain Ph.D. degree, they shall have to pass the NET examination.

Another station at Antarctica

4441. SHRI K.RAMA MOHANA RAO : Will the Minister of OCEAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of stations set up by India in Antarctica;

(b) the programmes being researched at those stations; and

(c) the future plan for setting up another station?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT) : (a) India has set up two permanent stations in Antarctica, namely 'Dakshin Gangotri' during 1983 and 'Maitri' during 1988.

(b) Since 1983/1988 the stations have been providing requisite infrastructure facilities for accommodating the Wintering and Summer teams and for carrying out scientific research in the fields of Atmospheric Sciences and Global Change, earth sciences, Engineering and Communication, Biology and Environment Sciences, etc.

(c) For establishment of another permament station in Antarctica, necessary reconnaissance survey will be taken up during 2004-05.

Railway projects in Iraq

4442. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) details of the ongoing railway projects in Iraq where Indian Railways or any of its agency is involved, project-wise;

(b) fate of these projects since Coalition forces attacked Iraq; and

(c) whether there has been any change in the contracts of rules since the attack?